



Wimbledon and Putney Commons

Resolution agreed at the Board Meeting held on Monday 12 February 2024 and continued on Monday 19 February 2024

Part A1 Public 12 February 2024

02.24.6 Levy 2024/2025

RESOLUTION

In consideration of:

- a) the Conservators' duty under the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act 1871 ('the 1871 Act') to protect and preserve the Commons for the purposes of recreation and exercise;
- b) the Conservators' duties as trustees of the charity to act only in the best interests of the charity and to safeguard the charity's assets;
- c) the inherent responsibility therefore of the Conservators to care for both the natural and built environments, to ensure that the landscape and buildings are properly maintained and visitors are able to access the Commons and to do so safely;
- d) the current condition assessment by Natural England of WPCC's SSSI habitats of unfavourable/recovering, which recognises that the necessary management measures are in place but that additional resources are required to restore WPCC's unique habitats;
- e) the policy agreed by the Board at its meeting on 14 December 2020 to set WPCC's levy at the maximum sum available for a further five year period from 2022/23 to 2026/27 and having noted:
 - i. the increases experienced in WPCC's expenses as a result of continued high visitor numbers to the Commons, the impact of inflation on WPCC's costs and the impact of such increases on WPCC's operational budget; and
 - ii. the potential impact of any increase in WPCC's levy on levy-payers, particularly those most in need and the protection afforded by the benefits reduction and exemption schemes operated by the three local authorities that collect the levy on behalf of WPCC (ie, Kingston, Merton and Wandsworth) for the purposes of both council tax and WPCC's levy;
- f) WPCC's powers under the 1990 Regulations to issue a 'special levy' for the purpose of providing for the items of expenditure set out in the 1990 Regulations and the responsibility of the Conservators to use best endeavours to issue the 'special levy' with respect to a financial year before 15 February in the year preceding the financial year;
- g) the high level of support amongst levy-paying households for an increase in the levy that was indicated in the recent formal consultation and the Board's decision of 4 December 2023 to continue to pursue a levy increase in line with the proposal in the consultation document noting that the Secretary of State is responsible for any amendment to the 1990 Regulations;

The Board RESOLVES to

- i. set the aggregate levy for the financial year 2024/25 at £1,622,642, the maximum allowed under the 1990 Regulations, representing an increase of 8.8608% from 2023/24 and potentially generating an additional £132,076 to support the work of the charity;

- ii. note that in accordance with the 1990 Regulations, each of the three local authorities have notified WPCC of their respective Council Tax Bases (CTB) for the 2024/25 financial year; the total CTB for the levy area totalling 41,447 and representing a marginal increase of less than 0.01% from 2023/24;
- iii. note that on the basis of the proposed increase in the aggregate levy and the CTB as reported by the three local authorities, the per household levy for a Band D property for the 2024/25 financial year would be £39.15 per year, representing an increase of 8.9% from 2023/24;
- iv. note that over the same time period, the number of physical properties in the levy area has increased from 41,670 (2023/24) to 41,826 (2024/25), representing an increase of 0.4%;
- v. note that the discounts, exemptions and benefits to which levy-payers are entitled remains largely unchanged from 2023/24 as a share of the total number of physical properties of 17%, ranging from 36% for Band A properties to 4% for Band H properties;
- vi. note WPCC's responsibility under the 1990 Regulations to use best endeavours to notify the three local authorities of WPCC's levy before 15 February in the year preceding the financial year;
- vii. note that WPCC's 'special levy' is included in the quantum subject to the ceiling under the Localism Act 2011 and that the local authorities do therefore need to take into consideration WPCC's levy in the setting of their council tax given the requirement to hold a referendum if the total increase were to increase beyond the ceiling set by DLUHC.

Part A2 Confidential

There were no Resolutions taken at this part of the meeting.

Present (at both meetings)

Conservators: Mrs Diane Neil Mills, Chairman

Mrs Sue Bucknall
Mr Oliver Bennett
Mr David Hince
Mr Peter Hirsch
Mr Michael Johnston
Mr Peter Shortt
Mr Nigel Ware

Officers: Colin Cooper, Chief Executive (CE)
Ms Paula Graystone, Deputy Clerk and Ranger
Mrs Angela Evans-Hill, EA to Chief Executive and Communications Officer
Mr Philip Warner, Management Accountant

Apologies: Mr Peter Haldane, Conservation and Engagement Officer
Mrs Maggie May, Fundraising Manager